

Record

THE BAPTIST SPECIAL EDITION
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CP instrumental in church births

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Longview Point Church in Hernando has been in its current facility since November of 2005. After being birthed in a hardware store on the square in Hernando, and not content to sit on its laurels, the church has taken church planting seriously and is a testament to what can happen when people understand the need and biblical mandate to reproduce.

"September will be our five year anniversary. God has been moving. We're almost to the state where we can't be considered a church plant any more," said Pastor Wade Humphries.

When asked what would be some church planting principles that would work anywhere, Humphries replied, "A pastor of a new church plant must begin to give away immediately. The key is to be giving to missions — even before a new church is started — and keep the focus outside of the four walls."

To some people, that might seem counter-intuitive. Conventional wisdom would state that in a new church, things need to be stabilized and kept "in house" before attempting a new church plant.

"I know that in the early stages of any church, we need resources coming in," said Humphries, "but if you don't begin giving away early, then it will be reflected in your DNA, and it will be harder to give away on down the road. Our people were ready to begin giving away because we tried to model giving early on by modeling mission giving."

"The other thing that has made the difference has been the ministry of the Word, a focus on expository preaching. We aren't doing anything particularly innovative in that area. People come to our church for a variety of reasons, but we feel they are hungry for the Word. It's been a key to our growth. That, and our missions focus, have been keys in our growth."

Longview Point and its mother church, Longview Heights in Olive Branch, co-sponsored LifePoint Church in Senatobia, which launched in April of 2005. "We actually started that work before we moved into our building, while we were still in the hardware store," said Humphries. "We began laying the groundwork for that work in fall of 2004, so our church [Longview Point] was only two years old when we began to actively plant that church."

This work was accomplished in part by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program (CP), administered through the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). "When we began the process for Longview Point," said Humphries, "we signed a covenant agreement between our church, Longview Heights, our association, and the Church Planting



A MISSIONS MINDSET — Wade Humphries, pastor of Longview Point Church, Hernando, is seen in the church's worship center, which serves as a gym and is used for many different functions. Humphries has led the church in participating in two more church plants in less than five years. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Department of the MBCB. Some of that was Margaret Lackey (State Mission Offering) money, some was CP. That gave us the resources to get started. Basically, Longview Heights paid my salary and some operating expenses, but CP was vital in us getting started. By 2005, we were entirely self-supporting.

LifePoint Church is in the process of being "weaned off" their financial support. "They are in the last year of us supporting them financially and getting close to their last year of support from the Convention," Humphries said. "They are going through the same process we did. They're doing great, averaging about 500 in three worship services."

The LifePoint pastor is George Ross. The church meets in a converted skating rink, with some Sunday School rooms added.

The reproduction pattern continues. Lifepoint Church has partnered with Longview Point to plant yet another church, this one in Tunica.

"This church plant will be LifePoint's first," said Humphries. "They are giving both finances and people to this new work. This church will be known as The Church at Riverbend. It is a wide-open opportunity. The growth in that area goes far beyond the

gambling industry. There is a planned MGM entertainment complex, championship golf courses, and thousands of homes. It's like an instant city. We're targeting the DeSoto County part of the Tunica corridor. If you drive down U.S. Highway 61, there's virtually no church presence out there. We're positioning ourselves ahead of the growth, although there is growth taking place right now.

"There are all sorts of people out there, with all sorts of different needs. We're hoping this new church will take the lead in starting new churches itself, to meet all those different needs."

The Church at Riverbend launched Easter Sunday, holding services at Lake Cormorant School. The pastor is Brian Tillman.

Longview Point is an example of how God blesses missions giving. The church has made efforts to increase their missions giving every year. The church is giving 15% to the Cooperative Program, 4.5% to their association, and one percent to benevolence. There are budget line items that support mission trips from the church itself. The church gives about 26% total to missions endeavors.

"You can't outgive God," Humphries said, "and we hope to be able to increase that amount every year." Out of a membership of about 500, the church gave over \$63,000 to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

"We believe in the Cooperative Program," said Humphries, "and we want to do all we can to support ministry and missions. People are excited about giving. It is a God thing."

Humphries is quick to point out that God has met all of the church's needs. Claiming Ephesians 3:20, Humphries stated, "We give all the glory to God. We try to live that verse, and it's not about what 'we've' done."

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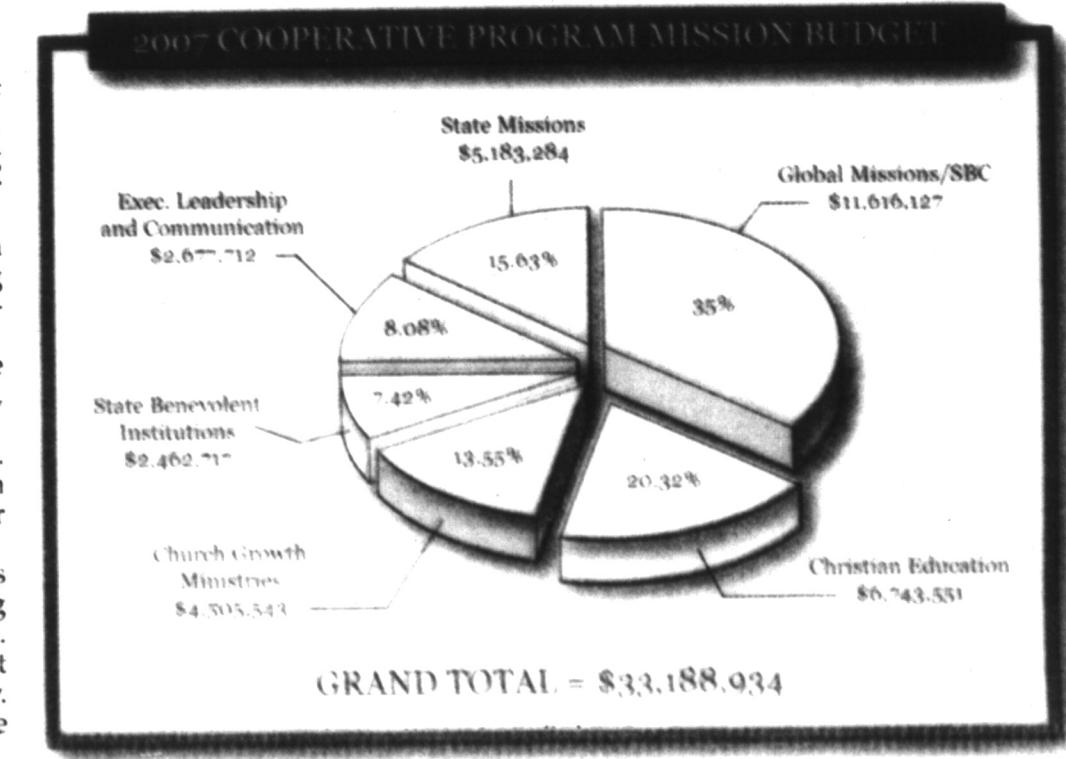
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SPECIAL
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM
EDITION



2006 COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORIES BASED ON CHURCH OFFERING AS REPORTED ON THE 2005-2006 ANNUAL CHURCH PROFILE: COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY

ASSOCIATION CHURCH

CP GIFTS



Stewart

Dean Stewart

Pastor of 38th Avenue Church, Hattiesburg

Why is the Cooperative Program important to me? I have never found promoting the Cooperative Program to be a challenge. On the contrary, I have always delighted in sharing what we are able to do as Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program. I would like to share with you a simple outline that explains my passion for the Cooperative Program.

THERE IS STRENGTH THROUGH COMBINING. As Southern Baptists we will accomplish more working together than we will as individuals. No single church will be able to support six seminaries and over 10,000 foreign and home missionaries. No single church could respond to the enormity of the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. When we combine, we have the strength and resources to do more than we could apart.

THERE IS A SENSE OF COMMUNITY. One thing that stands out in the New Testament is a sense of community among the members. When you come to the close of Paul's epistles, he shares a list of individuals saluting one another. Often today we are interested in building our own kingdoms. When we give to the Cooperative Program, the sense of community is elevated. From Decatur to D'Iberville the Cooperative Program keeps us on the same team.



Adams

Gary Adams

Pastor of Backway Church, Holly Springs

From a church planter's perspective, one can easily see the potential and power of God's people cooperating for a cause. In fact, a church planter is "cooperation dependent" (who's going to help me get started?). In church planting (or any great enterprise) there's always a need for more people committed to the vision. If "two are better than one" (Ecc. 4:9), how much more so is ten, or a hundred, or a thousand?

The same is true when it comes to fulfilling "The Great Commission" of Jesus, the greatest of all enterprises. The reach is global, so we need real cooperation (how about 16 million Southern Baptists cooperating to support the thousands of missionaries already on a field soon to exceed 6 billion people?). When churches and individuals cooperate for a cause (in this case, the Great Commission), they prove there is no strategy out there more effective, nor God honoring. It is called ... the Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention.



Barnard

Joey Barnard

Pastor of Mountain View Church, Smithville

As is the case in all denominations, we have had our share of problems, but when it comes to the Cooperative Program, Southern Baptists are right on target. What a blessing for me as a pastor to know that my church's tithes and offerings are supporting the world's greatest missions organization. What a blessing it is to know that through the Cooperative Program seminary students are being equipped to serve without the financial burden that is common in higher education. What a blessing to know that through the Cooperative Program disaster relief teams stand ready and willing to go and minister to disaster victims throughout the world. What a blessing it has been for me to know that my tithes and offerings are used to bring Mississippi and the world to Christ. The Cooperative Program is not just the greatest system of denominational stewardship ever produced; it is a blessing. It is a blessing to be supported and a blessing to be shared. What a blessing!



AM CENTURY CLUB GIVING

PROGRAM GIFTS ARE ACTUAL RECEIPTS POSTED BY THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION BOARD FROM OCTOBER 2005 - SEPTEMBER 2006

Hal Bates

Pastor of First Church, Collinsville

At the age of eight years old, Rev. Gordon Shamburger from Grandview Heights Baptist Mission in Pearl, which was supported by the Cooperative Program, came to our house to visit my family. He invited us to church. As a result, my family began attending the small fellowship which met in a quonset hut with sawdust on the floor and wooden folding chairs. It was there that I made my public profession of faith at the age of 10. I thank my Heavenly Father for those churches willing to give that I could come to know my Jesus. When I get to heaven, I believe God the Father will allow me to express my overwhelming gratitude to those believers who sacrificed that I could make the most important decision in my life.



Bates

When I graduated from high school, I received a basketball scholarship from Clarke Junior College. Again, Mississippi Baptists through the Cooperative Program influenced my life by not only providing me with a quality Christian education, but by introducing me to Yvonne Briscoe, who has now been my wonderful wife for 35 years. There were professors like Pop McGaugh, Dr. Moore, Dr. Carter, Coach Spencer, Dr. Melton, and Dr. Compere who placed their indelible mark of Christ on my life. They were able to do this because of the support of the Cooperative Program.



Kent H. Cochran

Pastor of Pleasant Grove Church, Brookhaven

The church where I made my profession of faith and the churches that I have served have been Southern Baptist churches which faithfully participated in the Cooperative Program. It is amazing what Southern Baptists are able to accomplish through the Cooperative Program, with the Lord's blessing.



Cochran

Stop and realize what Southern Baptist churches can do together. We can provide affordable Christian education on our Baptist college and seminary campuses; send North American Mission Board and International Mission Board missionaries to share the life-changing Good News of Jesus Christ to a lost world; provide professional medical care in our Baptist hospitals; and plant Southern Baptist churches where there is a need to reach people for Christ.

The Cooperative Program is the most effective way, I believe, to make an impact for Christ in our world. Together we can do more than we will ever do individually.

David Williamson

Pastor of Immanuel Church, Hattiesburg

During my younger years, I was raised in independent Baptist churches. In these churches, I can still remember the world maps posted in the hallways. Little colorful pins and photos indicated the locations and identities of missionaries supported by these churches. I was always struck by the limited number of pictures and pins posted on these maps. One of the primary reasons I became a Southern Baptist was because of the cooperation among churches reaching the world for Christ. I know we can do more together than we can do separately because I have seen it. Let us all continue to increase our cooperation until colorful pins and photos dot every inch of the world maps hanging in our church halls, not for our own glory, but for His.



Williamson

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
SPRING CREEK/NESHOBIA	29,780.92
BETHSAIGA/MONTGOMERY	29,086.17
GULF TEMPLE/ADAMS	19,931.48
FBC SAND HILL/GREENE	16,706.39
HEBRON/NORTH CENTRAL	15,579.67
WASHINGTON/ADAMS	15,556.84
NEW LIBERTY/TISHOMINGO	15,496.66
FBC STATE LINE/WAYNE	15,479.50
MT OLIVE/CARROLL	15,307.82
DOUBLE SPRINGS/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	15,234.39

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
EGO/PONTOTOC	42,979.95
TERRY/CREEK RIVER	41,636.85
NOXAPATER/WINSTON	39,818.77
NW PROSPECT/INDIANA	39,717.95
SPRINGFIELD/SCOTT	39,610.25
SHILOH/LAWRENCE	35,964.93
RAVENS SPRINGS/LEBANON	32,925.70
SKENE/MID DELTA	32,485.15
HEBRON/LAUDERDALE	29,750.20
SANDERSVILLE/JONES	29,700.44

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
CALVARY/ANGOLA	73,049.95
HICKORYNINE/TONI	72,502.73
UNION PLAIN/LODGE	69,862.50
PINE GROVE/PEARL RIVER	69,507.90
PETAL/HOPE/RATON	63,788.28
FBC GELINGO/COV JEFF DAVIS	61,416.87
CARROLLTON/CARROLL	59,070.40
CENTRAL/PIKE	59,062.75
REAVANT HILL/GOLDEN TRIANGLE	56,940.95
BRENTISS CO/JEFF DAVIS	55,724.51

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
FBC HODGEON/CHICKASAW	176,907.45
FBC WINGATE/MONTGOMERY	165,792.21
FBC GULFPORT/DAUPHIN ISLAND	160,989.70
FBC MAGNOLIA/WHITE	154,391.70
FBC NEWTON/WEST	152,432.65
FBC BIBBLE/CLARKTON/CLARK	151,841.70
FBC NEW ALBANY/CLARK	150,441.70
FBC CRYSTAL SPRINGS/CLARK	149,817.70
FAIRFIELD/COLLIER/CLARK	148,520.72
DE SAUZE/CLARK	148,085.20

CHURCH OFFERING CATEGORY:

ASSOCIATION/CHURCH	CP GIFTS
CP	100,000.00

2007 MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST
COOPERATIVE PROGRAM BUDGET

MISSIONS ALLOCATIONS

Global Missions/SBC

17.50%	International Mission Board	\$5,808,064
7.98%	North American Mission Board	\$2,648,477
7.57%	Six Seminaries	\$2,512,402
1.18%	SBC Operations	\$384,992
0.79%	Other Agencies	\$262,192
55.60%	SUBTOTAL	\$11,818,127

Christian Education

8.98%	Mississippi College	\$2,945,749
6.90%	William Carey University	\$2,311,421
3.18%	Blue Mountain College	\$1,049,472
1.15%	Board of Ministerial Education	\$380,444
0.17%	Education Commission	\$56,465
20.32%	SUBTOTAL	\$8,743,851

State Missions

5.41%	Collegiate Ministry	\$1,794,675
2.81%	Woman's Missionary Union	\$931,186
1.56%	Church Planting	\$519,328
1.39%	Mission Strategy	\$460,005
2.00%	Men's Ministry	\$384,069
1.63%	Missions Mobilization	\$543,579
0.82%	Stewardship	\$270,442
16.63%	SUBTOTAL	\$8,183,294

Church Growth Ministries

2.16%	Discipleship & Family Ministry	\$717,955
2.10%	Capital Needs	\$725,000
2.03%	Sunday School	\$674,569
0.90%	Conferencing	\$299,797
1.45%	Church Growth	\$483,497
1.47%	Church Music	\$489,006
0.82%	Evangelism	\$271,262
1.10%	Pastor/Leadership Development	\$365,754
0.89%	Church-Minister Relations	\$296,022
0.55%	Church/Community Impact	\$182,681
13.85%	SUBTOTAL	\$4,505,545

Executive Leadership & Communication

2.32%	Financial Resource Services	\$769,995
1.82%	The Baptist Record	\$602,608
1.38%	Communication Services	\$458,421
1.39%	Executive Administration	\$461,306
0.83%	Computer Information Services	\$273,653
0.34%	Convention & Convention Committees	\$111,520
6.88%	SUBTOTAL	\$2,677,712

State Benevolent Institutions

2.97%	Church Annuity	\$984,000
1.88%	Baptist Children's Village	\$623,158
1.31%	MS Baptist Foundation	\$435,045
1.06%	Christian Action Commission	\$353,035
0.20%	Historical Commission	\$87,479
7.42%	SUBTOTAL	\$2,482,711



GRAND TOTAL

\$33,188,934

CP grows as Texas church grows

PAMPA, Texas (BP) — What happens when two fires merge? A church on the grassy plains of the Texas panhandle is finding out.

When First Church in Pampa burned to the ground in 1973, the congregation rallied to rebuild, found a new energy for reaching out to people in their community — and through the Cooperative Program, around the world.

Johnny Funderburg, First Church's pastor since August 2004, was a pastor in Whitesboro, Texas, when his home burned to the ground in 1997.

"When you lose everything, it just humbles you," Funderburg said. "I think God used that opportunity of my being tender, needy, to draw me to Him. A passion for God came out of that... and what naturally flowed from that was to begin to pray and just trust Him."

First Church eagerly embraced Funderburg's commitment to prayer when they called him as pastor, coupling it with their commitment to reach out with God's love. That included the Cooperative Program channel of combining the efforts and resources of local Southern Baptist churches to make a difference in the lives of people across the nation and around the world.

"The Cooperative Program is the best tool we know of to reach the most people at the same time," Funderburg said. "It is by far in my opinion the very best method of doing missions. It enables our missionaries to concentrate their efforts on their work without having to worry about funding."

"It benefits the missionaries as well as their ministries. I'm glad we can provide for them the way we do, enabling them to give their attention to the people they're ministering to."

The Cooperative Program provides other benefits for First Church's members beyond the blessing that comes from freely giving as they have been given, the pastor said.

"As they give, they feel they have a part in the Great Commission," Funderburg said. "It's trite to say, 'Not everyone can go,' but not everyone can go. Our church benefits from being a minister to the missionaries. The Christian call is one of service; the Christian call is one of duty. It's a call of sacrifice."

"We give through the Cooperative Program in part so that the money we receive isn't just spent on us. We have this opportunity to minister beyond ourselves."

Today, about 700 people worship on Sundays at First

Church. Members are involved in a variety of ministries, starting by meeting local needs through a sizable, ongoing benevolence ministry that often includes the purchase of needed furniture as well as the more usual food and clothing.

A local crisis pregnancy center, women's homeless shelter, special needs residents, and a Baptist camp also draw church members' involvement.

A dozen members recently received disaster relief training for a feeding unit, and they're also involved in establishing an associational feeding unit.

First Church has helped with a variety of missions needs beyond Pampa over the years. Three recent destinations: New Orleans for Hurricane Katrina relief; Prairieville, La., for new church construction; and Fort Collins, Colo., for Vacation Bible School, singing and minor construction.

"We give 13.5% to missions through the Cooperative Program," Funderburg said.

"That falls in line with a missions mentality and is in line with trying to meet needs of people — doing the best we can to demonstrate that love and concern of the Lord."

Church tags CP as integral to missions

DENHAM SPRINGS, La. (BP) — Members of Amite Church believe in missions because they do missions, pastor Terry Booth says.

"It is my conviction that we [the Southern Baptist Convention] will not be able to sustain Cooperative Program support without direct involvement," said Booth, pastor of the Denham Springs, La., congregation since 1985. "There's just a difference when people come back from mission trips; it puts a fingerprint on their giving."

Amite Baptist gives 13.5% of its undesignated offerings through the Cooperative Program because it's a loyal Southern Baptist church with a strong belief in missions, Booth added.

"The connection is pretty easy for the congregation to grasp," Booth continued. "As [former Amite member] Derrick Thornton plants churches among Muslims in Atlanta, our CP missions dollars are helping him... When our members see this, it's easier for them to digest the concept of giving to missions, and to capture it and support it."

Booth said he returned in 2000 from a mission trip to Thailand with a fresh understanding of the need for personal involvement in missions, which he has been sharing ever since with his congregation, which numbers about 1,100 in

two Sunday morning services.

"This generation doesn't have any innate conviction that the Cooperative Program is fundamental to who we are," Booth said, "so I have to help them understand that the connection. What I have found is, if you put your people on the front line of missions, you have a story easier to tell about the cooperative venture."

Missions is an Acts 1:8 local-to-global, Kingdom-building venture for Amite Church. A preschool through second-grade program reaches about 350 youngsters and their families five days a week. The evangelistic Upward Basketball program touches another 330 ballplayers and their families. AWANA and youth programs, in-home small groups, a battered women's shelter, and various other entities provide more ways of reaching the community.

So do the church's two elaborate drama productions each year, which together result in 800 or more decisions. Each person receives personalized spiritual counsel and a Kingdom-building connection with the church of their choice.

"One thing I teach my people: 'Pray every day,' I tell them. 'Lord, let me so live today that when I go to bed tonight, somebody else will be better off because I was alive.'

"I see so much of their ministry carried out almost spontaneously if not actually spontaneously," the pastor continued. "What I see in my people is that heart that causes them to find ministry opportunities on their own... They really see themselves as being essential communicators of the Gospel through their gifts and talents and God-given abilities. They want to be a part of making a difference."

Since the pastor's return from Thailand, when he challenged the church to be directly involved locally to globally in missions, members have ministered in Uganda twice, Mexico twice, and once each to Idaho, Baltimore, Mississippi, and Florida, plus numerous mission trips throughout Louisiana.

At least 20 former members of Amite Church are serving on a church staffs. Several others are involved fulltime in missions initiatives of the SBC's International Mission Board or North American Mission Board.

With direct involvement, Booth said, "we start to see people through God's eyes, and that changes us — changes our actions, our giving, and our heart. We start loving people with God's love, and I will live and die for the fact that you've got to love people into the Kingdom. The Cooperative Program extends that love, expands that love."

Deeper Still conference a sellout, far from Bible Belt

SAN FRANCISCO (BP) — Although the West Coast is not part of the Bible Belt, an observer wouldn't have known it by seeing the 9,000 women at Deeper Still, a conference event led by popular Bible teachers Beth Moore, Kay Arthur, and Priscilla Shirer.

Women converged on downtown San Francisco to experience 10 hours of music, worship, and study led by the three well-known speakers and authors: Moore, founder of Living Proof Ministries in Houston; Arthur, founder of Precept Ministries in Chattanooga, Tenn.; and Shirer, founder of Going Beyond Ministries in Dallas.

"We're not here to entertain you," Arthur said during a welcome time during the March 9-10 sessions sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. "We are here to join with you and go deeper still into the presence of God."

Deeper Still was the first time the three women had shared a teaching platform. Each spoke of her tremendous respect for the others' ministry and the joy of being able to come together for the event. Playing to the crowd, the women laughed and made jokes about puffy lips, big hair, and high heels.

When it came time to delve into the Word, everyone got serious. Each speaker taught from a passage relating to King David.

Shirer began the teaching time by asking, "What was it about David that caused him to be a man seeking God's own heart? "He recognized God as his source. He realized everything he had and everything he was came from God ... [W]hen we give up control of our own lives and realize that God is in control, then when things start spinning out of control — and they will — we can look up at God and thank Him because He is going to have to take that responsibility."

Shirer cautioned the women that when asking God to become a presence and a passion in their lives, they must be ready to take in all that He is.

"David wanted the entirety of God — not only the sweet vanilla parts, but also His power and wrath. We have to be willing to take all of God when we invite Him to be close," she said.

When God is close, there will be attacks, Shirer said.

"Sisters, let me tell you this: As long as you aren't a threat, the enemy will leave you alone," she said. "As long as you just go to church, he will ignore you. But when you start spending time with God every day, the enemy can't stand that. The enemy knows he can't destroy you, but he will spend the rest of your life trying to distract you."

Shirer reminded the women that all religions are not equal, noting, "What separates us from every other religion on the face of the earth is we can talk to our God and He will speak back to us."

Shirer gave five ways to discern God's voice: Look for the message of the Spirit; live in the mode of prayer; search out the model of Scripture, always remembering God's voice will never contradict Scripture; seek out a mentor and submit to the mentor's ministry, just as Samuel did to Eli; and expect the mercy of confirmation.

Moore began her teaching segment in 2 Samuel 7, saying God is a God of timing. "When King David was settled into his palace and God had given him rest from his enemies, he was talking to the prophet Nathan," Moore said. "Then David decided it was wrong that he should be living in a palace while the ark of God sat in a tent. So Nathan told David to do whatever his heart told him. But later, Nathan got a word from God about it."

Moore said, "God didn't ask David to build God a house. It was not time for that to happen. God had plans for one of David's descendants to build a house after David died. It wasn't David's time."

She continued by reminding the women that David, now king, was an unlikely choice. He had been a shepherd, not one of noble birth.

Transitioning to talking about the power of God manifesting itself in a believer's life, she said, "God gets glory when no one else can explain what has happened to you. Are you where you want to be? No, of course not. Neither am I but praise God, are we where we used to be? No!"

Only through the power of God can Christians live the abundant life, Moore said.

"The victorious, delivered life is just as contagious as a defeated one," she said. "I want to live totally sold out to God and I want to take people with me. I want to take my family with me."

Arthur continued using passages relating to David and his relationship with God, this time focusing on



Bible teachers and authors (from left) Beth Moore, Priscilla Shirer, and Kay Arthur headlined Deeper Still, a two-day Bible study conference in San Francisco attended by more than 9,000 women. (BP photo)

the time after his sin with Bathsheba. "David was in the pit of despair when he was convicted of his sin," Arthur said. "Some of you are probably in the pit now. I've been in that same pit, one of my own making."

Quoting 2 Corinthians 12:9, Arthur said, "His power is perfected in my weakness."

She said David understood that God is a God of grace. "Even after his sin, David moved forward because he really understood that. God told David that he would live under His chastening hand for the rest of his life," Arthur said.

She listed four consequences of David's sin: The sword would never depart from his house; evil would rise up against him in his own household; his wives would be given to others in his household; and the baby he and Bathsheba had would die.

Despite all this, Arthur said, "God's grace was sufficient."

Arthur shared with the women the most important thing she has learned in her years of ministry: "God is sovereign. There is no greater authority than His. His sovereignty reigns over all. If you think you've gone too far away from God, remember this, ladies. If God has not taken you out, He still has a purpose for you."

Speaking for herself, Moore and Shirer, Arthur said, "It is our heart's desire that you would be so confident

in God so that you could say, 'If I live, praise the Lord; if I die, praise the Lord.'"

Faith Whatley, director of women's ministries at LifeWay, said the Deeper Still conference was the most cross-generational and multiethnic of any of the women's events sponsored by LifeWay.

"You have these three wonderful godly women who draw different groups. Women of all ages from high school to senior adults are here. We've seen black, white, Asian and Hispanic women. It's wonderful," Whatley said.

Whatley hadn't been sure what to expect with the event in San Francisco.

"What we have learned is that there are thousands of godly women in this area of the country who are hungry for solid biblical teaching," she said. "I'm honored that LifeWay was able to meet their heartfelt need."

A second Deeper Still event is scheduled for Sept. 7-8 in Nashville, but already has sold out Nashville's largest arena — the 17,500-seat Nashville Arena.

Paige Greene, director of LifeWay's women's events, said women who were unable to get tickets for the September Deeper Still event should continue checking the LifeWay website, www.lifeway.com/women, for information about a satellite location being set up in Nashville.

Deeper Still conference touches one attendee

SAN FRANCISCO (BP) — Garth and Pam Clayborn were born and raised in Arkansas but now, in California, are adjusting to a different culture and a deeper dependence on God.

Pam, a nurse, and Garth, a student at Golden Gate Seminary, moved last fall to Mill Valley across the bay from San Francisco for Garth's studies.

Pam and six other women from Strawberry Community Church, a Southern Baptist congregation in Tiburon, Calif., were among the 9,000 women who attended Deeper Still, a conference featuring Bible teachers Beth Moore, Kay Arthur, and Priscilla Shirer sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I really liked what Beth said, [that] until you have struggles and times of crisis, you can't really know how redemptive God is," Pam reflected. "I have to say I have really struggled



Clayborn

with the move from Arkansas where people choose a church based on programs, people, and worship styles. Out here, Garth and I just looked to find a church that taught biblical truths. You get more basic in Marin County where 98 percent of the people are unchurched."

What she heard at Deeper Still touched her heart, Pam said. "I needed this. Seeing all these women participating in a Bible study is encouraging."

Her husband is working on two master's degrees simultaneously, one in theology from Golden Gate and another in global studies through Union University in Jackson, Tenn. He also holds down a part-time job at the LifeWay Christian Store on campus.

Pam said she and Garth are more dependent on God than ever before, especially with no family around.

"You really do grow closer as a couple and as a Christian," Pam said.

Disney OKs homosexual weddings

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Walt Disney Parks & Resorts announced April 6 it now will allow homosexual couples to exchange vows in its public wedding spots that previously were reserved for people with valid marriage licenses.

"Bottom line, our business is all about hospitality," Donn Walker, a spokesman for Disney, told the Orlando Sentinel. "Our commitment at Disney is to welcome all guests in an inclusive environment and to make them feel respected. We think this is consistent with that long-standing policy."

Disney hosts about 1,500 weddings each year, mostly through its Fairy Tale Wedding packages that include a ceremony at one of the parks' marriage pavilions, Disney costumed characters at the reception and a ride in a horse-drawn, glass-enclosed carriage through the Disney property. Such packages can cost tens of thousands of dollars, The Washington Post reported.

"I think for years, Disney has reflected the values of America," Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, said. "Now, I think it could be argued they are trying to shape those values in a very radical way."

Walker told the Sentinel that Disney's policy change was not the result of a campaign by homosexual activists but was spurred by one homosexual couple's request to purchase a wedding package.

"At the end of the day, they're in business to make money," Steve Smith, communications pastor at First Baptist Church in Orlando, told the Sentinel. "This is an untapped market for them, obviously. I'm not entirely surprised that Disney would make a fiduciary decision over a moral one."

With the \$28,000 average cost of a Disney wedding, just one homosexual ceremony a week would earn Disney another \$1.5 million a year, Bob Witeck of a Washington-based public relations firm catering to homosexuals told the Sentinel.

"It's a savvy business decision," Witeck said.



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

MS POSITIONS

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STAFF CHANGES



First Church, Tupelo, has called Randy Von Kanel as senior pastor. Von Kanel, who previously served in this same position, recently fulfilled a call to missions in Barbados and Decatur, Ala., for a 15-month period.

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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Humble Service

John 13:1, 2-10a, 12-17

By Angie Boydston

Humble Service. I am not sure we see much of this these days. If you are like me, a favorite complaint is the one about there being no customer service anymore. No one goes the extra mile. No one seems to care about others' problems.

We are a people who demand service. Being served equals success to some of us. In fact, the standard of success might be measured by the amount and quality of service we receive. In contrast, how often do we consider what we can do in service to others?

Sometimes we see serving others as a sign of weakness or inferiority. Maybe we even see humility in service as a lack of drive or ability. Jesus, however,

set a very different standard. His example and thus His request of us is that we humbly serve others.

John 13 gives perhaps the greatest example of humble service ever. In the upper room during the last supper, Jesus performed the task of washing the disciples' feet. What a contrast this account of the last supper is to Luke's version of the events. John focuses on Jesus' humility while Luke shows the disciples arguing over who among them was the greatest.

Verse 1 of John 13 indicates just how much Jesus loved the men who were with Him that night. Though He knew His time was coming to leave them, the scripture says He was prepared to show them the "full



Boydston

extent of His love."

It would have been so easy for Jesus to focus on Himself at this time. The greatest challenge ever was about to begin for Him. Instead, He chose to humble Himself as a servant to others.

We should be so willing to put others first. However, busy lives and a self-centered focus prevent our doing so most of the time. Opportunities arise daily for us to exercise humility and concern for others. How often do we miss the chance to lift someone up by considering his needs before our own?

Foot washing was a necessity during those days. The dusty streets left sandal-clad feet in need of cleaning. A host would be proud to provide a servant to perform this menial task.

As Jesus was washing their feet, the disciples must have felt confusion, amazement, and unworthiness. They simply could not understand His pur-

pose in this act. Peter even questioned the shift in roles in verse 6. Why would the Lord wash the feet of the servants?

Even as Jesus led him to see his need for washing in verse 8, Peter still tried to dictate how it was done. In his typical over exuberance, he asked for his hands and head to be washed as well.

We can be like Peter sometimes, missing the spiritual lesson. Just as Peter did, we say no to something God has for us. Or, we try to second guess or tell God what He should do or how He should do it. How do we willingly submit to God's work in our lives, even when we may not understand it?

Jesus asked the men in verse 12 if they understood his object lesson. As their "Teacher" and "Lord," He was on a higher level than they were. Therefore, He was offering an example for them to follow (verse 15).

He was showing them much more than simple service. The significance of His example was a picture of self-sacrifice. Truly, the meaning of this act involved

all of His life and the death and resurrection about to take place.

Jesus' words in verse 17 lend an importance to following this example. He says that one is "blessed" to practice such humility. True blessing comes from practicing humble service, putting others' needs before our own.

The theme for these next few weeks of bible study is *What Does Jesus Want from Us*. I think it is worth noticing in these chapters of John that the first example is one of servant leadership.

For Him to offer such a profound example has to mean that He wants humility and service to others to be our starting point. The thought of humble service to others should be a first thought for us, not a last. Next time you feel entitled to some service, let it be a reminder that Jesus offers us a blessing if we follow His example of serving others.

Boydston is Preschool and Children's consultant in the Sunday School Dept., MBCB, and a member of Pinelake Church, Brandon.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Prepare for Suffering

1 Peter 3:13-4:6

By Ivan Parke

In the study course Empowered Parenting, Robert J. Morgan titled chapter 12 "Painful Parenting: When Children Break Your Heart." Similar wording would depict accurately this life, "When — NOT If — You Suffer."

Jesus repeatedly warned His followers to expect persecution: "You will be hated by all on account of My name" (Mt. 10:22a). He also encouraged them, "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great" (Mt. 5:11-12a). Peter, like Jesus, linked the verb "rejoice," adjective "blessed," and topic "unjust suffering" (1:6-7; 3:14; 4:12-16).

The focal passage, 3:13-4:6, features three statements that have perplexed interpreters.



Parke

[a] "[Jesus] went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison" (3:19)

The Apostles' Creed reads, "[Jesus] descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead." Does 1 Peter 3:18-20 refer to a preaching "tour" through hell? NO. The Greek verb, translated "went," does not mean "to descend."

Verse 20 provides more insight, answering two pressing questions: [1] Who are "the spirits now in prison"? and [2] When did Jesus "make proclamation" to them? The "spirits" used to be people, living before the flood, when Noah was building the ark. Jesus "preached" to them — another rendering of the verb "proclaim" — "when they, as people, were being disobedient." The Greek verb, translated "be disobedient," is a participle that specifies the circumstance of the main verb "make proclamation" (3:19).

Verse 18 answers a third pressing question: How did Jesus preach to people that lived before the flood? The resurrection restored ("made alive in the spirit") the glory that the Son of God yielded to become human (see Phil. 2:5-11). Before the incarnation, the Son of God had existed eternally. "In [that form, as] spirit," He communicated through Noah's work and words (see Heb. 11:7; 2 Pet. 2:5).

[b] "Baptism now saves you" (3:21)

In 3:20-21, Peter compared "baptism" ("pledge of a good conscience" NIV) to the "ark." God had used the ark to "save" Noah and his family (literal rescue) from a watery grave (Gen. 6:11-8:19). Similarly (symbolic), the waters of baptism save us "by the resurrection" (NIV). The ark would have been a floating coffin without God. Baptism would be meaningless ritual without the resurrection. The resurrected Jesus saves (literal rescue).

[c] "For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead" (4:6)

Prior to 4:6, Peter wrote, "[God] who is ready to judge the living and the dead." Context, therefore, favors interpreting "those who are dead" (4:6) as deceased already — physically, NOT spiritually.

In 4:6, Peter emphasized how long the gospel had been "preached." Some hearers no longer lived. One of two outcomes awaits anyone who hears the gospel: [1] "might be judged" (NIV) or [2] "may live in the spirit." The mood of both verbs, "live" and "judge," is the subjunctive, which expresses probability.

1. To suffer unjustly requires living righteously.

Wickedness provokes suffering, a certainty that righteousness may not prevent (3:13-14; 4:4). Sometimes, God ordains His followers to endure hardship (3:17; 4:19).

Peter urged his readers to do what was right before any suffering occurred (2:12, 20; 3:14, 16-17; 4:19). To suffer deservedly impedes the work of the Church (2:20; 3:17; 4:15). To suffer innocently impresses the world (2:12), creating an audience for the Gospel.

Anticipating such a hearing, Peter charged his readers,

"Always be prepared to give an answer ... to give the reason for the hope that you have" (3:15 NIV). The Greek noun *apologia*, translated "answer" (NIV), also signifies "defense," formal (court-room) or casual (impromptu).

The Apostle discouraged aggressiveness: [a] wait until someone "asks" and [b] answer with "gentleness" (respect for people) and "fear" (KJV — respect for God).

2. To suffer unjustly will never be fruitless.

In verses 18-22, Peter cited what Jesus accomplished because He had suffered: our reconciliation (v. 18), His resurrection (vv. 18, 21), our salvation (v. 21), and His ascension (v. 22). The "therefore" in 4:1 indicates a correspondence between His experience and the experience of His followers.

When Christians suffer unjustly, godliness is a result (4:1b-3). Godliness attracts harassment (4:4). Consequently, Peter exhorted, "Arm yourselves" (4:1), a military term for readiness.

Parke is Associate Professor, Dept. of Christian Studies and Philosophy, MC, and a member of Morrison Heights Church, Clinton.

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

MARCH 28-APRIL 8

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1. Bible Drillers, Coldwater Church, Philadelphia



2. Bible Drillers, First Church, Helena



3. Flag Presentation, Cairo Church, Ecru



4. Women on Mission, Gillsburg Church, Gillsburg

1. **Coldwater Church, Philadelphia**, recognizes its Bible Buddies and Bible drillers who participated in the church drill Mar. 25. Shown are the participants.

2. **First Church, Helena**, held its children's and youth Bible drills Mar. 18. Shown are Caryn McWilliams, D.J. Tragell, Nicole Mercer, Clint Lewis, Steven Gentry, Sandy Waller, Devin Anderson, Jessica Anderson, Patrick Lewis, and Dixie Anderson.

3. **Cairo Church, Ecru**, had a flag presentation Mar. 11. Jimmy Hamblin presented the flag, which was accepted by William Dowdy and Keith Nance. Shown, left to right, are David Morgan, Nance, granddaughter Heidi and Hamblin.

4. The Women on Mission of **Gillsburg Church, Gillsburg**, honored the children with stories told by Mattie Rials. Clowns entertained and refreshments were served. Some 40 children participated. Shown are some of the participants. Victor Walsh, pastor.

5. The Blessings of Christmas, a queen-sized quilt featuring handprints of 32 children and grandchildren of **Sulphur Springs Church, Conehatta**, was sold to the highest bidder during a silent auction. The children were able to contribute an additional \$601.95 to the church's annual Lottie Moon offering. Shown are some of the children.

6. **Bethesda Church, Fayette**, ordained Ray Smith as deacon Mar. 25. Shown are Bonnie Maher, Smith, and pastor Carl Mason.

7. Several members of **First Church, Byram's**, wMu made fleece blankets for the Pregnancy Crisis Center. Shown are some of the participants.

8. **West Laurel Church, Laurel**, recently ordained Jose Rodriguez to the ministry. Shown are pastor Jeff Taylor, Karli Rodriguez, Rodriguez, and Elena Rodriguez.

9. **Dublin Church, Carson**, ordained Robert Harper Feb. 18.

10. **First Church, Morton**, recognizes its youth and children's Bible drillers: A. J. Reeves, Austin Mauney, Kara Beth Johnson, Emily Marler, Allison Reeves, and Harlan Mauney.

◆ ◆ ◆



5. Blessings of Christmas Quilt, Sulphur Springs Church, Conehatta



6. Deacon Ordination, Bethesda Church, Fayette



7. wMu, First Church, Byram



8. Rodriguez ordained, West Laurel Church, Laurel

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11. Sanctity of Human Life Display, First Church, Plantersville



12. Morton recognized, First Church, Ripley



13. Women on Mission, Palti Church, Jeff Davis Association



14. Rikard Licensed to Ministry, Holcomb Church, Holcomb

11. First Church, Plantersville, placed crosses on display for Sanctity of Human Life month. Shown are the crosses and pastor Danny Balint.

12. First Church, Ripley, recognized Phil Morton for his faithful devotion to Upward Basketball, never having missed an Upward game in seven years as greeter. Shown are pastor Rex Yancey, Morton, and Upward Director Matt Childs.

13. The Women on Mission, Palti Church, Jeff Davis Association, recently sold church cookbooks, with the proceeds going toward WOM mission efforts. \$1000 was sent to wMu Pure Water, Pure Love for water purification systems in areas where safe water is not available. Shown are some of the participants.

14. Holcomb Church, Holcomb, licensed Bobby Rikard to the gospel ministry Mar. 18. Shown are Rikard and pastor Bob Johnson.

15. The youth of New Henleyfield Church, Carriere, went to Mandeville, La., to see David Phelps in concert. Shown are the youth and Phelps.

16. First Church, Flora, hosted an RA Pine Wood Derby Apr. 1, with approximately 20 boys participating. The event serves as a fund-raiser to sponsor mission work during the year. Winners were, front from left, Hays Rogers, second place Lads Class; Houston Wooten, Best of Show; Blake Braswell, third place Lads Class; back, Hunter Grewe, second place Crusaders Class; Swayze Bozeman, first place Lads Class; Trey Bozeman, overall winner; Cooper Hillman, third place Crusaders; and Chip Goza, first place Crusaders.

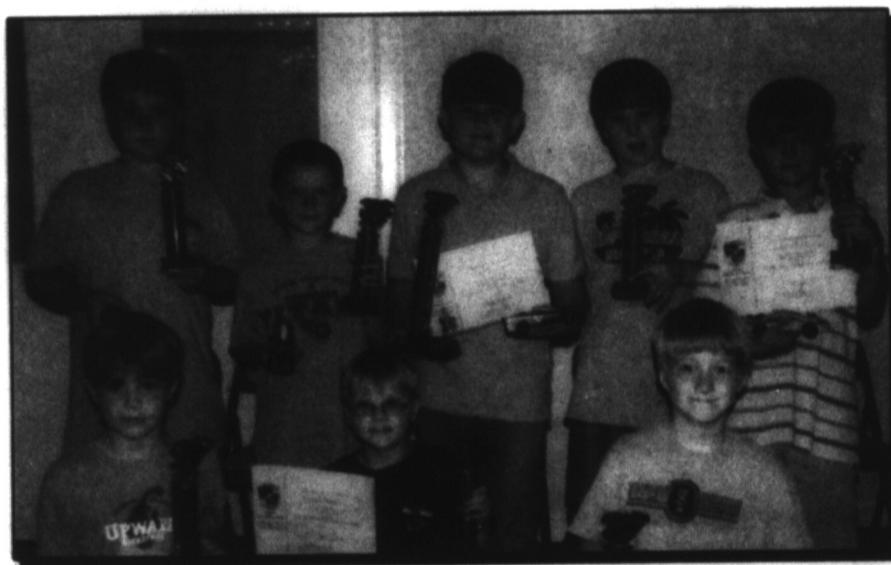
17. RAs from Corinth Church, Magee, raised money to help an RA group at First Church, Bay St. Louis, with financial assistance. The boys made the presentation Mar. 11. Shown are the participants.

18. New Heights Church, Summit, recently ordained Jerry Causey to the ministry. Causey is serving as minister of education at New Heights. Shown are pastor Rick Kennedy, left, and Causey.

19. Calvary Church, Oxford, recently ordained Mike Popernik, Roger Miller, and Charles Brewer as deacons.



15. Youth Trip, New Henleyfield Church, Carriere



16. RA Pine Wood Derby, First Church, Flora



17. RAs, Corinth Church, Magee



18. Causey ordained to ministry, New Heights Church, Summit